

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 6

DECEMBER 6, 1939

DEAR MEMBER,—The past fortnight has been dominated by the intensification of the war at sea. The Germans stick at nothing in their attempt to starve us into submission. We, on our side, have intensified the blockade with a view to breaking German resistance by cutting off essential supplies. That is the grim reality. The only thing that gives a gleam of rational meaning to the insensate competition in destruction is that it had its origin in part in the clash of opposed conceptions of life and that it may make a vital difference to mankind which set of ideas survives to shape the future. Moreover man is so strange a compound of the earthly and the spiritual that even this demonry of violence is lit up by the selfless devotion and astonishing gallantry of those who face the perils of the sea and air, reminding us of the heights of nobility to which human nature can on occasion rise; as well as by personal acts of kindness to foes as well as friends, such as the friendliness of the crews of two British destroyers to captured U-boat prisoners, recorded in last Monday's papers.

THE TWO FRONTS

I have said that it *may* make a vital difference who wins the war. If we and our allies win, everything will depend on the kind of people we are when the task of reconstruction has to be taken in hand. I wrote about this last week but the matter is of such crucial importance that I quote from a letter I received a few days ago from one of our collaborators enforcing the same point: "If we agree that this war is not an ordinary one, but the external manifestation of a spiritual conflict, it is clear that we are not merely fighting Nazi Germany, but a world movement which affects every country to a greater or less degree, the difference being that the Nazi Government has almost openly identified itself with these 'evil things,' whereas our official spokesmen have openly rejected them. But there is surely a danger, as in the last war, that our high ideals become diluted at last in the violence and hatred generated by war. We must, therefore, aim at building a second front behind the political one, a front which will defend our principles from being undermined from within or from below."

THE YOUTH OF THE NATION

I said in our first number that the needs of youth, and in particular of those between the ages of fourteen to eighteen, are the most pressing problem with which the nation has to deal in its internal life, and that the problem has an increased urgency in war time. The King has written to the Prime Minister expressing his close personal interest in the work which is being done for the youth of the country by local authorities and voluntary organisations, and his hope that it will be continued and extended despite the handicaps imposed by the war.

The circular promised by the President of the Board of Education (CNL No. 1) has been sent by him and the Secretary of State for Scotland to all local authorities for higher education, urging co-operation between them and voluntary organisations to meet the needs of juveniles between the ages of 14 and 18. It asks that local youth committees be set up by next March and that the local authorities should use their statutory powers to help these committees by providing accommodation and staff and by making grants towards premises, equipment and instructors.

In response to my request a fortnight ago for information on the subject I have had a number of most interesting letters which will be carefully digested. The question how the Churches can further and assist in the effort to provide for the needs of youth is receiving the attention of the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life.

WHY CHRISTIANS MAY KEEP A STOUT HEART

The conclusions reached in last week's supplement were destructive of easy hopes of the early achievement of a true international order. I suggested, however, that Christians can face disillusionment and unpalatable reality without being dismayed by them. Why?

The fading of earthly utopias, which have been the dream of every revolution, as well as of nineteenth century liberalism with its faith in Progress, ought to awaken us at last to the truth that the Christian hope is not bound up with the existing state of the world. Christianity is not, as many people hazily suppose, a humanitarian programme for a better world. It is the faith that at a given time there was manifested in history and embodied in an individual life a Love that is stronger and more enduring than the most imposing structures of earthly might. The coming of Christ, as our chronology teaches us, initiated a new era. God entered into the world to join issue with evil and redeem men from its power. In this conflict between real forces—not between unsubstantial ideals and intractable reality—we are called to play our part. What is demanded of us is fidelity; the issues we can leave with quiet confidence in higher hands.

The making of utopian plans for a new world order is quite alien to the genius of Christianity. Christians are prone to indulge in it like the rest, because they too have been infected by the spirit of the modern age, in which man regards himself as the architect of his own destinies and tries with colossal conceit to take on his own shoulders the load of the universe. That even the appalling mess that man has made of things is not able to wean us from this presumptuous folly is shown by the readiness and confidence with which we rush into making fresh plans for some new utopia.

Do not misunderstand. I do not for one moment question that it is our inescapable responsibility to endeavour to bring the vast and complex forces of the modern world under intelligent control. We need more science, more knowledge, more intelligent planning, more bold and venturesome experiment. I am concerned only with the temper in which these tasks are undertaken.

The primary concern of Christians is not with the distant ends of action but with the *source* of action in daily response to God's demands. Our first duty is not to busy ourselves with vast programmes of reform but to do God's will in the concrete situation in which our individual responsibility lies. To some is given, of course, the responsibility of large-scale planning and the direction of national and international policies. But these

tasks also have to be undertaken with a restraining sense of the limitations of human wisdom and the unceasing need of divine guidance.

Trust in God will keep us from demanding or expecting immediate results. Easy and quick solutions would be possible only in a world of magic and caprice, not in an orderly spiritual universe, the laws of which were enunciated by Jesus when he declared that a good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit nor a corrupt tree good fruit. If Western society has departed from the truth and turned to the worship of false gods there is no way of regaining its health except by the recovery of a true scale of values. It is sheer delusion to suppose that any reorganisation of existing forces or improvement of machinery will get us out of our difficulties.

It is evidence of the extent to which the mind even of Christians has become secularised that we desire so eagerly not only speedy results but the kind of results which, in the Christian scale of values, are of secondary importance. What is it that we really seek? Is it the early restoration of conditions of comfort and ease? But worldly comfort has very little to do with the religion of the Cross. God's ways are not our ways, and it may be that His highest purpose for us and for mankind can be realised only through discipline and suffering. What St. Paul prayed for the Christians to whom he wrote was that they might be "strengthened with all power"—not to make this earth a comfortable home, but—"unto all patience and long suffering with joy."

If our trust were in ourselves alone, we might well ask, as we look around us, where the spiritual energies are to be found to combat and overcome the demonic forces of evil on every hand. But faith in the Holy Spirit as an abiding presence and power in the world can keep us from despondency and faint-heartedness. If our earthly life has windows opening into a spiritual universe of Light and Love, there are unseen powers which can invade our lives and infuse new vitality into the life of mankind. More important than anything that we *do* is a receptivity of soul to such visitations from the unseen world. The activity of Jesus was directed to awakening in men the spirit of expectancy.

THE SUPPLEMENT

Amid almost universal calamity the sufferings of the Jews are pre-eminent. Part of the tragic story is told in this week's supplement. To a far greater extent than is generally realised the future course of the world and of Christianity itself may be determined by the attitude which Christians take towards these issues.

Yours sincerely,

I. H. De Laan

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The Defence of Liberty. Following on the debate in Parliament, which was commented on in C.N.L. No. 3, the Home Secretary, after consultation with an informal committee of members of Parliament representing all parties, has made substantial amendments in the criticised Defence Regulations. New safeguards are provided for those against whom it may be necessary to issue detention or restriction orders. The regulation dealing with propaganda has been drastically revised to apply not to every expression of opinion but only to propaganda in which use is made of "any false statement, false document or false report," and it will be a defence for the defendant to show that he had reasonable ground for believing the statement to be true. The Home Secretary retains the right to prohibit processions and public meetings, but may no longer delegate this power to local magistrates or officers; decisions in these matters thus remain in the hands of a Minister responsible to Parliament.

Both the result and the method by which it was brought about are a striking evidence of the radical difference between the totalitarian regimes and the free institutions which we in this country are privileged to enjoy.

The Church in Spain. The Madrid correspondent of *The Tablet* gives an account of the relations between General Franco's Government and the Roman Catholic Church. Conversations have begun in regard to a Concordat. The Society of Jesus has been readmitted and given rights which it has not enjoyed since its expulsion in 1767. Property which was confiscated from the Church has been restored. Religious instruction has been re-established in all universities, secondary, and primary schools. The grants allotted by the State for maintenance of the Roman Catholic religion and the clergy are being substantially increased. Altogether a sum of about £3,000,000 a year will be given to the Church; this is larger than the amount received under the Monarchy. The question of the manner of the appointment of bishops is under negotiation.

From the Post Bag. "In one club in the North of England it became impossible to raise the money to pay the leader's salary. It

is a big club needing a full-time leader. Rather than give it up the club leader took job in a town seven miles away as labourer in a munitions factory at £2 10s. a week. He bicycled to and from work. Fortunately the money is now forthcoming, but the story will show that the club must be something worth fighting for."

Discussion Groups. Reports have been received from about forty discussion groups interested in the *News-Letter*. One of the groups has forwarded a memorandum, entitled "Towards the Establishment of Lasting Peace," which is a careful bit of work, dealing with real problems. This group is willing that the results of its work should be at the service of other groups; copies of the memorandum can be obtained at the price of 2½d. post free on application to the Rev. George Bromby 10, Silverdale Road, Southampton.

Groups interested in the study of the Christian attitude to war will find an excellent outline of study in a pamphlet by Maurice B. Reckitt entitled *God's Opportunity* (price 2d. published by the Church Literature Association (8, Great Smith Street, Westminster S.W.1) for Church Social Action.

Limits of space may preclude the mention of similar pamphlets and memoranda in the *News-Letter* in the future, but groups which are starting may be glad at this stage to have their attention called to these aids.

Group Subscriptions. To further the work of discussion groups we are willing to supply the *News-Letter* to such groups in quantities at somewhat reduced rates. Those who desire to avail themselves of such an arrangement are invited to write to us, giving particulars of the composition and programme of the group.

Case for the News-Letter. We are now able to supply members with folders in which to keep their copies of the *Christian News-Letter*. These folders, of black rexine lined with buff, have adjustable clips for holding from 1 to 26 issues, and are stamped on the front with the C. N.-L. monogram in gold. They cost 2s. each, post free.

Membership. The number of our members is now 6,044.

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THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

THE FATE OF THE JEWS

IT is difficult to know where to begin to speak of the effects which the war has already had on the Jewish people. It has affected them in many special ways, and the Jewish tragedy in Poland is already appalling. Even in this country the war has had special repercussions where they are concerned.

EVACUATION AND REFUGEE TRIBUNALS

It would seem that proportionately more Jewesses than Gentiles accepted the opportunities for evacuation offered to expectant mothers and mothers with young children. This is probably true, for the effects of the crisis last year were similar. The Jewish people are less phlegmatic than the Anglo-Saxons, and their history has prevented them from taking root as deeply as the native population. In any case, considerable districts in Essex, Hertfordshire and elsewhere certainly obtained the impression that a large part of the East End of London was populated by Jews. The reputation of the evacuated adults was generally unsatisfactory; and wherever some of the evacuated persons were Jewesses the stories which circulated nearly always specified a Jewess as the culprit—and in many cases it was true. But an interesting thing has happened; the more completely unassimilable ones have left the area unlamented, and those who are left are largely redeeming the meaning of the word "Jew." Not entirely, of course, but to an encouraging extent. The tune of the rural aristocracy has changed from "a perfect shambles, my dear, and *all* the bedding had to be destroyed" to "quite a nice woman, my dear, and such *sweet* children." Those children who came by themselves with the schools are mostly settling down all right. The Jewish community has set up a special committee to deal with all questions of Jewish evacuation, and if any recipient of this letter is troubled by any question affecting such, he

has only to write to Mr. D. Israel, the Board of Deputies, Woburn House, Upper Woburn Place, W.C.1.

It is surprising to find that the total number of refugees from the Nazi régime in this country is over ten thousand children and sixty thousand adults. This includes Christians as well as Jews, and a good many thousand who had only transit visas, but who have been prevented from continuing their journey by the war. Many have been thrown out of work by the war, especially those in domestic service, so that the present cost of maintenance is over £8,000 weekly—a sum which will soon exhaust all the funds in the hands of the different Jewish and Christian refugee organisations. They are being passed through tribunals as quickly as possible, and some will be able to take up one of the various forms of national service. It is worth noting that those who have had all restrictions on their freedom removed can now register at their local Labour Exchanges for employment. Most of the information obtained about the tribunals shows that they have been working very well, and that their fairness has made a deep impression on the refugees themselves.

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

The problem of refugee settlement has been greatly complicated by the war, although President Roosevelt held his inter-governmental conference a few weeks ago in spite of it. One or two plans are being put into operation, primarily with American money, and on the American side of the world. Both the Philippines and the Dominican Republic are prepared to experiment with group settlement of a fairly generous kind. But this can only affect a few hundreds in the immediate future. The thousands left in Western Europe—and if Holland and Belgium are brought into the war, there will be tens of thousands more affected—are trapped. France has interned all male refugees from 17 to 65 years of age, while women, children, and old people have been

left free. The cases of interned people are now being investigated by tribunals. Once the political liability of the refugee is established he is given the choice either to join up with the Foreign Legion in North Africa for a period of five years, or to be assigned a residence in one of the interior Departments in France and may then be called up for national service of a non-military character. Some thousands of refugees, whose papers are in order, are already being allowed to continue their journeys overseas. The British have admitted and temporarily placed in camps the shiploads of Jews which were waiting off the coasts of Palestine, and some regular immigration is still continuing. Meanwhile some thousands of refugees have crossed into Hungary, Rumania, and the Baltic States as a result of the invasion of Poland. Various organisations are just beginning the heartbreaking task of providing them with food, shelter, and warm clothing.

THE SITUATION IN GERMANY

War conditions have served to make the lot of German Jews harder even than it was before. Jews are often refused foods which are rationed, or only allowed them under conditions which make it very difficult to get them. Many hundreds have been drafted into various kinds of labour corps, and Jews in concentration camps have very little chance of getting out. All cultural activities have been suspended, and Jewish-owned wireless sets have been confiscated. Property is still being confiscated all the time to collect the unpaid portions of the £80,000,000 fine levied after the shooting of von Rath. In addition to this a new capital levy of 25 per cent. has been made on the remaining Jewish wealth.

There have been many arrests since the Munich bomb affair, and there is a general fear that what little capital Jews have left will be taken from them, if there are no pogroms. The present statistics of Jews in Germany reveal the plight to which six years of persecution have reduced the community. From over half a million in the old Reich it has sunk to 185,000, of whom over 108,000 are women and only 15,000 children under 15. Probably two-thirds of this whole figure are wholly or partly dependent on charity. The situation for Jews in Austria and Czecho-Slovakia is considerably worse than in the old Reich. There quantities are already being transported to the Lublin Reserve, which I mention on the next page.

THE FATE OF THE JEWS IN THE INVASION OF POLAND

Ghostly as is the situation for all the population of Poland, there seems little doubt that the Nazis have singled out Jewish townships and districts for particularly savage bombardment and for bombing and machine-gunning from the air. Several such townships have been completely wiped out, and the fleeing population mown down with machine guns. The Jewish district in the centre of Warsaw suffered very heavily also, and there are said to have been something like forty thousand Jews killed there alone. What remains of them and of refugees from the surrounding district are kept within a barbed-wire ghetto and continually recruited—men up to 70, women up to 55—for forced labour on clearing the ruins.

Since the invasion has been completed, the army of occupation and the newly-arrived Gestapo have been behaving with horrible brutality. Jews have been shot in hundreds, many have been robbed of all their possessions; hundreds have been turned out into the open fields, and the neighbouring Poles threatened with death if they give them food or shelter. Women are taken away to act as "laundresses" to the soldiers, and men up to the age of 70 are drafted off to unknown destinations as labour corps. The Jews are constantly singled out from the Poles for specially severe treatment, and every effort is made to accentuate existing Polish anti-Semitic feeling. Placards and broadcasts assert that the Jews started the war, and that all the misfortunes from which Poland has suffered in consequence of it are due to them. In the streets, clothing and food are taken away from Jews by German soldiers and police and given to Poles. As the Poles also are ill-clad and starving, you can imagine that the Pole generally keeps what he gets. Polish anti-Semitic organisations are encouraged to attack Jews, and the bulk of the population, even when it is not ill-disposed, is too crushed to offer more than occasional assistance to individual Jews or Jewish children.

It is still impossible to get accurate figures of the number of Jews now brought under German, Russian and Lithuanian rule. By the pre-war figures Germany would have about two million, Russia a million and a-half, and Lithuania between one and two hundred thousand. But hundreds of thousands of Jews are wandering about the country, and it is impossible to say exactly where or how many they are. The general direction of their flight is

naturally away from the German occupation, and it may be that something like half a million succeeded in crossing the Russian frontier before it was closed or in hiding in Hungary, Rumania or Latvia. These refugees are in pitiable conditions. Not only are they ill-clad for a winter flight, and starving, but few families have been able to keep together, and husbands, wives and children are straggling all over the country looking for each other. The Russians are trying to feed them and collect them together, to produce a visible contrast between their humanity and the bestiality of the German occupation. They do not allow any open anti-Semitic activities, but some Jews have already suffered as capitalists, and it is likely that the conventional Communist attitude towards religion may lead to persecution, for the Jews of Poland were very orthodox.

In her new capital, Vilna, Lithuania has been having trouble with anti-Semitic riots started by Polish nationalists—largely students, I fear—but she is really doing her best to maintain order.

It will be impossible ever to restore Polish Jewry to its former condition, whatever the outcome of the war. The losses in lives, possessions, and economic position which the Jews have suffered are beyond computation or repair. American, British, and other relief organisations are already at work, but under war conditions the amount which they can do is pathetically limited, especially as over a million and a half are said to be completely destitute. Before the winter is over the losses of Polish Jewry may well be reckoned in six figures.

THE LUBLIN RESERVE

In the south-east corner of the territory still in German hands lies the country town of Lublin, which has a Jewish population of some 50,000. This town, and a district round it which is given as 4,300 square miles, is planned by the Nazis as a Jewish reserve under German control. None but Jews are to be allowed to live in it, but no Jew is to be allowed to leave it. Already over forty thousand Jews seem to have been transported to it from Vienna, Czechoslovakia, Upper Silesia, and parts of Poland. The Nazis announce that ultimately two million Jews will be placed there, leaving the whole of the rest of the Reich "judenrein." In that part of Polish territory in which a "Protectorate" is apparently to be set up Jews may still be allowed to live, but this point is obscure. Apart from doctors, no profession is allowed at present except agriculture; but

how two million people are to live by agriculture on four thousand square miles of poor land I do not know. It would imply a density of population equal to that of England. The plans of settlement are in the hands of the Gestapo chief, Himmler, and they are obviously not intended to lead to anything but the extermination of the Jews involved, the possession of their property, since they may take nothing with them, and the acquisition of what foreign currency relief organisations may be persuaded to spend in an effort to save them. Nor is there the slightest likelihood that such a reservation will be permanently accepted by the Poles, so that the survivors of the scheme, if any, would only have to be transported again elsewhere at the end of the war.

PALESTINE

It is a relief to turn from the tragedies of Eastern Europe to Palestine. In that country the war, with its entire alteration of conditions, has offered an unexpected opportunity to clear up some of the mess in Jewish-Arab relations created by the rebellion and the White Paper. For both Jews and Arabs are supporters of the general British cause. In addition, the fact that external circumstances make it impossible for large numbers of Jews to get to Palestine at present could be used to relieve the Arabs of their immediate fears. Some of the Zionist leaders are realising that this is a breathing space which can be used for invaluable work, but some—unhappily, but very naturally—see only the tragedy in Eastern Europe and demand that hundreds of thousands of these unhappy victims of the war should be immediately allowed to enter Palestine—which would stir up all the Arab trouble again. As a matter of fact, I doubt if the Zionists could take advantage of it even if the doors of Palestine were opened. There is naturally some considerable disorder in the Palestinian economy as a result of the three years' disturbances, and now the war; and there is a fair amount of unemployment and not much money to deal with it. Yet it is amazing how consistently the Jews have continued with the foundation of new settlements in spite of all the troubles of the last three years, and it is to be hoped that progress of a steady kind may still be made. But the vital need of the present situation is that it should be used to discover, while conditions are favourable, a real basis of common Palestinian life with the Arab population. The task is difficult, but not beyond the possibilities of wise leadership.

And there is every argument in the present conflict for Jews and Arabs to get together as residents of the Near East who do not want to be used as a pawn in anybody's game of power-politics.

THE SITUATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

I can only refer to two other countries, and in both the news is bad. Some time ago Hungary introduced a law drastically limiting Jewish participation in public and economic life. It is doubtful whether it could even have been carried through without considerable dislocation of Hungarian life, and a period of several years was prescribed so that it might be brought into effect gradually. The latest news is that the Government, partly under the fear of Bolshevism created by having a common frontier with Russia, partly to relieve economic depression among non-Jews, is proposing to bring the whole law into effect almost immediately. As the newly-acquired Hungarian territories (taken after the partition of Slovakia and Ruthenia) have a large and

desperately poor Jewish population, the consequences are likely to be tragic for the Jews and serious for the Hungarians.

The other country to be mentioned is Rumania, which has admitted hundreds of refugees who have succeeded in crossing her frontiers. As is well known, there has long been a violent conflict between the King and the main anti-Semitic party, the Iron Guard. So far this has reacted favourably on the Jewish situation—within limits. But at the beginning of November the King took into his party, which is the only one allowed in the country, the veteran anti-Semite Professor Cuza and his following. This is certain to mean trouble for the Jews. Whether the recent change of Government will counterbalance this it is still too early to see.

The future? At present the prospect for more than half the Jews of the world is as dark as it could be. In a later supplement an attempt will be made to deal with the question what may be done to alleviate the gloom.

JAMES PARKES.

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